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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of the public library in serving children from infancy to age six. Recommendations from early childhood education authorities pertaining to 5 areas of public library work with young children (services, programs, materials, physical facilities, and personnel) were obtained through questionnaires and interviews. Data was synthesized and used to develop guidelines for public libraries. Among the recommendations: specific preparation of children's libraries to work with young children and their parents and to select appropriate books and materials for young children; utilization of volunteers (especially senior citizens) for reading to children; provision of books, educational toys, musical instruments, etc. for children to use at the library and at home; provision of services and programs which focus on parent education and are taught by specialists; coordination and integration of services, programs, personnel, with other community agencies in order to avoid duplication of efforts. (Author/CM)

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An Analytical Study of the Recommendations of Early Childhood Education Authorities With Regard to the Role of the Public Library In Serving Children From Infancy to Six Years Of Age

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Background and Introduction

The present concern of public library administrators in serving very young children has been a mounting development during the past ten years. The research studies of such authorities as Benjamin Bloom, J. McVicker Hunt, Jean Piaget, and Burton White have increased the awareness of educators and librarians regarding the impact of the environment during the early years upon later development and learning (1). However, recently, a lack of research on public library service to young children has been noted by several public librarians working with young children (7, 6, 9, 4, 3).

After conducting a national status survey of public library service to young children and reviewing the literature, Tate concluded that children's librarians need: (a) research that gives justification for public library services to young children, (b) guidelines and clear directives for public libraries in serving young children, and (c) clarification of the role of the public library in serving young children. To fulfill these needs, Tate recommended that child development specialists and researchers in the field of early childhood education help provide children's librarians with programmatic implications of research findings in early childhood education (7).

The need for librarians to utilize research findings from other disciplines and to apply such research findings to relevant issues in librarianship, was also expressed by Shera(6). The conclusions drawn by Tate were similar to the needs for research identified by Winnick and Gallivan. Winnick evaluated public library service to children and recommended that the fundamental question of the function of the public library be considered. According to Winnick, the need exists to define objectives for public library service to children and to provide standards which can be used to measure performance (9).

Gallivan conducted a research study of servic to children in public libraries and reached the conclusions that a definite need exists to identify, examine, and evaluate library service to children(4). Similarly, recommendations for research in the area of early childhood were included in a goals/feasibility study report by the Public Library Association (3).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study investigated the role of the public library in serving young children from infancy to age six. The purposes of this research were to obtain recommendations from early childhood education authorities pertaining to the five areas of services, programs, materials, physical facilities, and personnel, and to utilize these data in the development of guidelines for public libraries in serving young children.

This study was significant in the following ways:
(1) Recommendations of nationally recognized early childhood education authorities regarding public library service to young children were obtained. A review of the literature indicated that no research studies had been made to obtain the recommendations of nationally recognized early childhood education authorities regarding public library service to young children.
(2) The study provided needed data as a basis for the development of up-to-date guidelines for public libraries in serving young children. The present guidelines, the Standards For Children's Service In Public Libraries, were written in 1964, and are outdated, vague, and not specifically intended for young children from infancy to age six (2).
(3) This study helped clarify the role of the public library in serving young children. The recent trend to include three- and four-year-old children in educational settings necessitated additional information (1, 5, 8).

Methods and Procedures of the Study

Instrumentation

For the purposes of this study, a questionnaire and an interview schedule were developed. The five areas of public library work with young children which were included in both the questionnaire and the interview schedule were: services, programs, materials, physical facilities, and personnel.

The questionnaire consisted of forty-four items with three possible responses -- recommended, not recommended, and undecided-- as well as space for respondents to write other items and comments. The questionnaire was developed by utilizing data gathered from forty graduate students in early childhood education and from

a review of the literature. This instrument was pilot tested for clarity and relevance, then validated, and finally tested for reliability, using the Kuder-Richardson formula. The interview schedule was also pilot tested to determine the clarity and validity of the questions, to verify the effectiveness of the personal interview and the telephone interview technique, and to generate more specific follow-up questions for each general question asked of the respondent.

Selection of Respondents

The questionnaire was mailed to two groups of early childhood education authorities, totaling fifty-nine persons, who were nominated by two methods. The nineteen members of Group I were nominated by at least one national professional organization concerned with the education of young children. The forty members of group II were nominated either by the Early Childhood Education Consultant for the Texas Education Agency or by one of the three area heads of the early childhood education programs in the North Texas Federation of Universities. These four persons in Texas who nominated the members of Group II were asked to identify early childhood education authorities who meet at least three of the following five criteria:

(a) a descriptive book, article, or research publication in the field of early childhood education in the past five years,
(b) a presentation to a national group in an appropriate field of study in the past five years,
(c) a doctorate degree in an appropriate area of specialization (early childhood education, child development, child psychology),
(d) a minimum of forty years of age, and
(e) a minimum of ten years of experience working with and/or planning for young children.

Eleven of the nineteen early childhood education authorities from Group I were randomly selected to participate in this study by consenting to an interview, in addition to completing the questionnaire.

Collection of Data

At the end of six weeks, forty-four usable questionnaires were returned. Seventeen were completed by early childhood education authorities in Group I, and twenty-seven were completed by early childhood education authorities in Group II. Five authorities were interviewed via telephone, five were interviewed in person, and one was interviewed via cassette tape. Permission was obtained from each interviewee for the interview to be recorded on cassette tape.

Analysis of Data

Analysis of the interview data involved first making transcriptions from the tapes of the interviews. Then data which two of three designated doctoral candidates in early childhood education identified as distinct and appropriate recommendations were classified into cells of a matrix.

Analysis of the questionnaire data involved comparing the percentage of recommended and not recommended responses for each item between Group I and Group II, using the test of the statistical significance of the difference between the percentages of two groups. Six of the forty-four items were found to have statistically significant differences in the percentage of recommended and not recommended responses between Group I and Group II. In each case, the twenty-seven early childhood education authorities in Group II, nominated by persons within Texas, recommended providing the item more strongly than did the seventeen early childhood education authorities in Group II, nominated by the two national professional associations.

Comparison of the Significant Differences in Recommended Responses

Item	Grp. I % of Rec.Resp.	Grp. II % of Rec. Resp.	t
Parent educ. programs	65	93	2.34
Anxiety-related programs	35	74	2.55
Children's theatre or stage	76	96	2.02

$p \geq 2.02$ for the .05 level of significance
For Group I, N = 17; For Group II, N = 27

Comparison of the Significant Differences In Not Recommended Responses

Item	Grp. I % of Not Rec. Resp.	Grp. II % of Not Rec. Resp.	t
Auth.&Illus. programs	24	4	2.02
Educational toys	18	0	2.26
Picture card catalogs	24	4	2.02

$p \geq 2.02$ for the .05 level of significance
For Group I, N = 17; For Group II, N = 27.

Analysis of the questionnaire data also involved calculating the percentage, for the total number of respondents, of each of the three possible responses -- recommended, not recommended, or undecided -- for each of the forty-four items on the questionnaire. Fifteen items were recommended by seventy-five per cent or more of the total respondents.

Items Recommended By Seventy-Five Per Cent or More Of All Respondents

Item	% of Rec. Resp.
Materials for use in laundromats, stores, centers	82
Parent education sessions in child rearing, storytelling	82
Programs with authors and illustrators of children's books	84
Puppetshows & storytelling at shopping&preschool centers	86
Parent/child reading program similar to"RIF"	75
Programs on "making books" -- child dictates&adult prints	89
Educational toys;games,dolls,puzzles,storybook characters	80
"Parent shelf";adult resource mats. on ch's lit.&ch.dev.	98
Bulletin bds. to display children's creative works	82
Children's theatre and puppet stage	89
Personal storage area for children	80
Courses in child development or early childhood educ.	84
Training or experience working w/parents&adults	86
Senior citizens as volunteers to read to children	95
Early childhood education consultant	89

N = 44

Analysis of the questionnaire data also revealed that five items were recommended by twenty-five percent or less of the respondents.

Items Recommended By Less Than Twenty-Five Per Cent of All Respondents

Item	% of Rec. Resp.
Testing& evaluating language devel.&reading ability	7
Programs involving formal reading instruction	14
Live pets, in cages with food, for home use	14
Equipment for outdoor play	23
Television and game room	20

N = 44

Summary of Findings

A majority of participants recommended:

1. Specific preparation of children's librarians in working with adults and young children
2. Knowledge and expertise of children's librarians in children's literature, child development, and in the selection of appropriate materials for young children
3. Utilization of volunteers, especially senior citizens
4. Utilization of an early childhood education consultant
5. Services and programs, which focus on parent education, and are conducted by specialists
6. Preparation of child care personnel and teachers in storytelling and in the selection of materials
7. Services and programs involving parent/child interaction
8. Services, programs, materials, and physical facilities which can facilitate and encourage interest in books and which can be directly related to reading and language arts activities
9. Provision of materials; such as, cloth, cardboard, and sensory books; educational toys, musical instruments, costumes, audiovisual equipment, and realia for use at home and/or at the library by young children
10. Coordination and integration of services, programs, materials, physical facilities, and personnel of public libraries with those of other agencies in the community in order to avoid duplication of efforts

A majority of participants did not recommend:

1. Services, materials, and physical facilities which focus on unstructured recreational play
2. Services, programs, and materials which focus on formal teaching and testing in cognitive areas

Responses of the participants were inconclusive regarding the following:

1. Adoption of the public library service policy that young children must be able to print their own name in order to obtain a public library card and check out materials
2. Design and utilization of the public library physical facility as an active place for young children to use materials at interest centers or as a quiet place primarily functioning as a source of supply for obtaining materials to be used elsewhere
4. Provision of programs regarding all aspects of the curriculum; such as, art, science, and music
5. Provision of film programs for groups of young children
6. Provision of transportation to and from the public library for young children

Implications

The following implications are based upon the findings:

1. Schools of library science should provide professional preparation and experiences in early childhood education and/or child development for library students who plan to work with young children in public libraries. An internship in working with adults and young children would be desirable.
2. Public libraries should re-examine their role and function in terms of the services, programs, materials, physical facilities, and personnel which they now offer for young children, in order to avoid duplication of efforts by other agencies in the community.
3. Public libraries should utilize supportive staff; such as, volunteers, and an early childhood education consultant.

Recommendations For Further Research

The following recommendations for further research are based upon the findings and implications:

1. It is recommended that a study be conducted to determine the degree to which public libraries presently follow the recommended guidelines developed from this study.
2. It is recommended that a study be conducted to compare the recommendations of early childhodd education authorities to the recommendations of other groups; such as, parents, teachers, and children's library media specialists, with regard to the role of the public library in serving young children.
3. It is recommended that a study be conducted to determine the extent of duplication of services, programs, materials, and physical facilities by public libraries and other agencies in the community.
4. It is recommended that a study be conducted to determine the feasibility and effectiveness of an interdisciplinary program between library schools and colleges of education for preparing students who plan to work with young children in public libraries.

Guidelines For Public Libraries In Serving Young Children From Infancy to Six Years Of Age

The recommendations obtained through two methods -- interviews and questionnaires -- from early childhood education authorities were synthesized and utilized in the development of guidelines for public libraries in serving young children. The guidelines are generalized statements, developed from the findings of the research, which could be used in the future as a basis for the development of specific evaluative criteria. The guidelines contain the twenty-two items of the questionnaire which were recommended by sixty-five per cent or more of the respondents, as well as the recommendations made by the majority of the interviewees on a particular topic.

A. Services Which Public Libraries Should Provide For Young Children:

1. Referral services, such as medical and legal information, to aid parents and adults working with children
2. Home visits to demonstrate techniques to parents, such as storytelling, use of educational toys, and puppet construction
3. Library materials for use in laundromats, grocery stores, airplanes, shopping centers, and parks and recreation centers
4. An interagency planning commission to avoid duplication of services within the community by the public library

B. Programs Which Public Libraries Should Provide For Young Children:

1. Parent and child field trips
2. Parent education courses and discussion sessions in such areas as child development, storytelling, preparing for a new baby, and child rearing
3. Opportunities to meet authors and illustrators of children's books
4. Puppet shows and storytelling at shopping centers and local preschool centers
5. A library reading club in which parents read a selected number of books to a child and are awarded paperback books
6. Sessions on "making books", with the child dictating the story as the adult prints it
7. Parent/toddler programs
8. Parent participation in public library programs with young children
9. Programs which foster the development of listening and language abilities of young children
10. Specialists presenting programs for adults on topics of parenting
11. Programs for child care personnel and teachers, on preparation in storytelling and in the selection of materials

C. Materials Which Public Libraries Should Provide For Young Children:

1. Educational toys; such as, games, dolls, puzzles, blocks, and stuffed storybook characters, in the public library collection, for use at home

C. 2. Sensory oriented books and materials, such as scratch and smell books and cloth books, in the public library collection, for use at home and at the public library
3. A "parent shelf" of adult resource materials on topics of children's literature and child development, for use at home
4. Recordings and musical instruments in the public library collection, for use at home
5. Listening and viewing centers, with appropriate software, for use at the public library
6. Temporary exhibits of realia, with related books and activities, as suggestions for parents

D. Physical Facilities Which Public Libraries Should Provide For Young Children:
1. Card catalogs, with pictures to indicate subjects
2. Bulletin boards to display creative art, craft, or written works of children
3. A children's theatre or puppet stage for dramatic presentations
4. An area for children to store personal belongings
5. An area for parents to meet, converse, and relax
6. Low shelving, cushioned nooks, and other similar areas for the convenience and comfort of young children

E. Public Library Personnel and Their Qualifications Which Public Libraries Should Provide For Young Children:
1. Completion of courses in child development or early childhood education
2. Preparation or experience in working with parents and adults
3. Active membership in an early childhood professional organization
4. Senior citizens as volunteers to read to young children
5. An early childhood education specialist as a consultant
6. A field experience or internship, during library school preparation, in working with young children and adults
7. Older citizens as volunteers
8. Special courses during library school preparation in the selection of materials for very young children

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